



Quarterly Report
April 2009

Director's Message

CNTSC specialists continue to work with the States to strengthen communication networks, share technology developments, and identify opportunities for cooperative action.

One such activity is Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD) and Forage Suitability Group Descriptions (FSGD).

Earlier this year, with the support of the CNTSC Technology Advisory Board, we developed and released an ESD/FSGD strategy to the States, designed to help facilitate the development of ESDs and FSGDs in a more consistent and coordinated effort within the States of the Central Service Area.

To support this strategy, the CNTSC will offer four net conferences during June 2009. The four ESD/FSGD net conferences will be held on June 2, 15, 16, and 17, 2009, respectively.

The CNTSC staff is always available to support your State's ESD/FSGD efforts by providing training and support, facilitating interstate coordination, and assisting with quality assurance reviews.

Please contact us at the CNTSC for assistance.

RONALD C. WILLIAMS

Technology Transfer & Training

GIS Tools Demonstrated

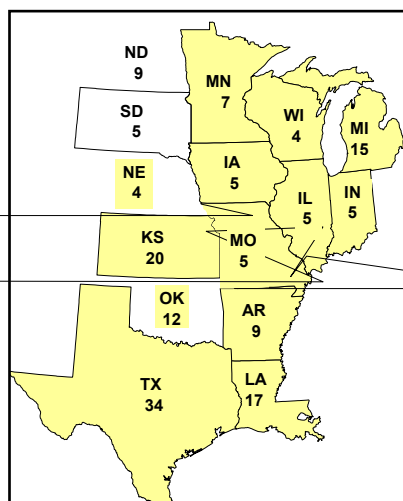
During the monthly Central States GIS working group teleconference on April 7th, there were two demonstrations of geospatial tools developed by members of the Central States group.

These applications are examples of the capability of improving NRCS business with Geospatial technology and the innovative power applied by users that are knowledgeable of both the new technologies capabilities and the work that needs to be accomplished.

Travis Rome, State GIS

Specialist in Kansas, demonstrated the Conservation Program ranking tools that have been developed in Kansas. This application is delivered to the field offices as an ArcGIS map document file. This tool automates several processes in providing answers for the ranking of cooperators' land for enrollment in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Figure 1.1 Screen capture of the Conservation Program GIS Interface for EQIP ranking.



CNTSC Assistance Provided

October 1, 2008 – March 31, 2009

Number of Requests per Central State

Figure 1.2 – During the first six months of FY 2009, the CNTSC has responded to 156 requests for assistance in the Central Service Area.



Conservation...Our Purpose...Our Passion

SITES Workshop - Phoenix, Arizona

A Stability & Integrity Technology for Earth Spillways (SITES) Workshop was provided for Arizona NRCS and partners on March 31-April 2, 2009. CNTSC Engineer Tony Funderburk assisted in providing the training. A total of 25 NRCS employees NRCS partners participated. The software will design a dam or pond to comply with the NRCS criteria contained in either Practice Standard 402 for Dams or 378 for Ponds. The SITES computer program will design a pond with or without a pipe, route the principal spillway hydrograph and set the auxiliary spillway elevation, route the freeboard hydrograph and set the top of the embankment pond and analyze the auxiliary spillway by both the tractive stress, the velocity methods and analyze erosion in the auxiliary spillway. The tractive stress method is outlined in USDA Agricultural Handbook #667. The SITES computer model is instrumental in the design and rehab of watershed dams.

For training in the use of SITES for the design of ponds, Tony G. Funderburk can be contacted at 817-509-3289 or tony.funderburk@ftw.usda.gov.



Participants in the SITES workshop held in Phoenix Arizona

WEPS Update

The issue of how to select climate stations for the Wind Erosion Prediction System (WEPS) has been resolved, bringing the model one step closer to completion. Mike Sporcic, CNTSC Wind Erosion Specialist, met with the ARS WEPS team the last week of March 2009, to finalize the process.

Two different processes will be used to select climate data for WEPS, depending on location. West of the Rocky Mountains, state agronomists have delineated the areas of cropland, and selected the climate station that applies to each of these areas. WEPS will be used only within these designated cropland areas, using the climate station for that area. On cropland East of the Rocky Mountains, climate data will come from two sources. Wind data will be generated “on the fly” using a weighted average of the data from the three stations nearest to the planning location. Temperature and precipitation data will come from the station nearest the planning location.

It will take a little more time to make the needed changes in the WEPS model code, but NRCS should soon be able to get the model to the field. The new changes will be field tested and the model will be CCE-certified before its release.



Wetland Team Activities

Made a presentation at River Restoration Northwest Conference at Stevenson, Washington, February 2nd, titled “*Beyond the Active Channel - Planning for Floodplain Interaction.*”

Completed hydrologic analysis of Texas High Plains playa using Soil-Plant-Air-Water (SPAW) model. The effort utilized measured field data to calibrate the model.

Provided Wetland Restoration Program planning assistance to Nebraska.

Prepared “*Fluvial System Restoration*” workshop for delivery in Michigan in May. This is a cooperative effort between the National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center staff, CNTSC Wetland Team, and CNTSC Fisheries Biologist.

Wetland Technology Development Team



Grazing Land Team Activities

The Grazing Lands Technology Development Team coauthored an article with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) titled '*State-and-Transition Models for Heterogeneous Landscapes: A Strategy for Development and Application*' that was published in the January 2009 issue of the Journal for Rangeland Ecology and Management.

The team cosponsored, with ARS, a symposium at the Society for Range Management (SRM) Annual Meeting held February, 2009 in Albuquerque, NM, titled '*Rangeland Hydrology and Erosion Technology Advancements*'.

Team members have presented oral and poster presentations at the Eastern Native Grass Symposia in South Carolina, the Soil and Water Conservation Society Farming with Grass Conference in Oklahoma, and the SRM Annual Meeting in New Mexico.

An Ecological Site Description (ESD) Contracting Workshop was conducted at the SRM Annual Meeting. The workshop objective was to discuss current ESD contracting procedures and document procedures for improving the contracting process. NRCS personnel and private contractors participated in the workshop.

The team is working with NHQ to develop a bi-national Ecosystem Restoration Initiative between the United States and Mexico. Team members met with a bi-national Team of Specialists in Agua Prieta Sonora México to review and edit the Draft Bi-National Borderlands Ecological Restoration Plan of Action.

Wildlife Technology Development Team

Wildlife Team Activities

The Wildlife Technology Development Team has been involved in the preparation and review of several technical publications and Farm Bill-related activities. Bill Hohman, CNTSC Wildlife Biologist, provided summaries of recent literature to agency biologists. Steve Brady participated in the National State Resource Conservationist's workshop held recently in Atlanta, GA.

The Wildlife Team assisted Matthew Judy, CNTSC Environmental Specialist/Ecologist, to prepare an Environmental Assessment for Drummond Flats WRP site near Enid, OK. In response to concerns raised by the base commander at nearby Vance Air Force Base that birds using the WRP site posed increased risk to military aircraft, NRCS-OK engaged USDA-APHIS to develop a proposal for a risk assessment.

The Wildlife Team assisted NRCS-LA with the proposed "Working Wetlands Initiative," which will provide environmental stewardship payments to rice-crawfish producers in southwestern Louisiana through a pilot Farm Bill program. The initiative is intended to compensate producers for ecosystem services they provide in the form of habitat for wetland-associated wildlife. The Team, working with extension specialists in Louisiana, developed documents describing normal agronomic practices for rice cultivation in southwestern Louisiana (proposed pilot area). These practices are to serve as the baseline against which incentives would be provided to producers that adopt additional "wildlife friendly" practices.

Advanced Prescribed Burning Workshop



Reggie Blackwell, CNTSC Rangeland Management Specialist, assisted the Nebraska NRCS to deliver an Advanced Prescribed Burning Training March 30 – April 3, 2009. The training provided both classroom and on-the-ground applications of prescribed fire elements such as fire ecology, fire as a conservation practice, prescribe burn

plans, firebreak design, ignition techniques, fire equipment and safety. Field opportunities included reviewing recently implemented burns, developing burn plans, and firebreak layout. All participants had the opportunity to work on two training prescribed fires, gaining experience with drip torch operations, running slip –on pumps, establishing wet line, patrol, and mop-up. Approximately 25 people received this training, which is part of an ongoing annual effort by Nebraska NRCS to provide prescribed fire training for its employees, both at the basic and advanced levels.

CNTSC to Present Four ESD/FSGD Net Conferences to States

The CNTSC will present four Ecological Site Description (ESD)/Forage Suitability Group Description (FSGD) net conferences to States during June 2009. These net conferences will introduce the recently released CNTSC ESD/FSGD Implementation Strategy and demonstrate the types of information that is contained within the CNTSC ESD/FSGD SharePoint Site located at <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/st/CNTSC/ESD/>. This strategy is intended to help States be more efficient and effective in ecological site development efforts.

The net conferences are scheduled as follows:

- June 2, 2009, from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. CDT – An introductory net conference will be presented for Central State Conservationists, State Resource Conservationists, and State Soil Scientists.

The following three net conferences are technical sessions scheduled for Central State technical staff such as soils, range, agronomy, forestry, biology, and grazing lands, and will be held from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. CDT.

- June 15, 2009 – The following States are encouraged to join this session: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.
- June 16, 2009 – The following States are encouraged to join this session: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin.
- June 17, 2009 – The following States are encouraged to join this session: Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

States outside of the CNTSC Service Area are also invited to participate in any of the four sessions. For more information on these net conferences, contact Homer Sanchez, CNTSC Rangeland Management Specialist at 817-509-3227 or homer.sanchez@ftw.usda.gov.

Central State Resource Conservationists' Workgroup Teleconference

May 26, 2009, 9:00 a.m. CDT

Contact Cheryl Simmons, CNTSC Technology Specialist, at 817-509-3314, or cheryl.simmons@ftw.usda.gov

Central State Soil Scientists' Technology Workgroup Teleconference

July 9, 2009, 9:00 a.m. CDT

Contact Ed Griffin, CNTSC Soil Scientist, at 817-509-3304, or edward.l.griffin@ftw.usda.gov

Central State Engineers' Teleconference

July 21, 2009, 10:00 a.m. CDT

Contact Jerry Walker, CNTSC Agriculture Engineer, at 817-509-3387, or jerry.walker@ftw.usda.gov

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